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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

ADVANCE RELEASE

Fish and Wildlife Service

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Sharks that attacked a netful of mackerel off the Massachusetts coast this month were successfully repelled by the "shark chaser" developed by the Navy for use in life jackets, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service reported today. This is the first recorded use of the chemical by fishermen against their traditional enemy, the shark.

The shark chaser was given its initial trial in the fishing industry by the Gloucester mackerel seiner, the *ANGIE AND FLORENCE*, at the suggestion of the Fish and Wildlife Service. On the basis of reports of the effectiveness of the shark chaser in protecting military personnel forced down at sea, Service personnel conceived the idea that the chemical might be used to discourage sharks from attacking fish nets. Samples were accordingly obtained from the Navy and distributed to the Service's field offices in the New England area.

Alfred Piscatello, deck hand aboard the *ANGIE AND FLORENCE*, reported to the Service's Gloucester office that sharks were numerous in the vicinity in which the seiner was operating. After making a set by carrying the net in a circle around a school of mackerel, the vessel towed two blocks of the shark chaser around the net. The containers of the chemical were weighted and sunk to a depth of 20 to 30 feet, so that the substance would be concentrated at the level at which the sharks usually move in to attack the fish caught in the net. In addition, the seine boat - a small accessory boat used in mackerel fishing - spread some of the chemical around the net.

"The sharks headed for the net," reported Mr. Piscatello, "but as soon as they hit the black slick formed by the shark chaser they were noted turning and swimming away from the net. One shark was caught in the net. Under ordinary conditions, this would result in serious damage to the net. Instead, there was no damage and the shark was very docile and was easily lifted out by hand by the fishermen."

In spite of the abundance of sharks, the *ANGIE AND FLORENCE* received no damage to its nets, and caught about 58,000 pounds of mackerel. Other boats fishing in the same area but without protection against sharks averaged only 5,000 to 25,000 pounds of fish and suffered severe damage to their nets.

Fishermen report that sharks, always a nuisance because of their attacks on fish in the nets, have been unusually abundant in the New England area this

season. The most common species are reported to be the blue and sand sharks. Although some market for shark meat exists in Boston and other New England ports, there is no well developed fishery for sharks in this area. On the Pacific coast, where the liver oils of sharks are exceptionally high in vitamin A content, shark support a valuable industry.

Fish and Wildlife Service officials said that further trials of the shark chaser will be made before the close of the mackerel season if sufficient quantities of the chemical can be obtained. If the method proves as successful as its first trial suggests, a large financial saving to the industry will result. The cost of a mackerel seine is several thousand dollars. Even if the net is not completely destroyed by the attacking sharks, the loss of time while the net is repaired and the loss of fish through the holes in the net represent a serious economic waste.